

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE CHAPLAIN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I very much appreciate the statement of the distinguished majority leader. We are very fortunate in the Senate to have as our Chaplain a man who has certainly earned the right to pray for our country, an admiral in the Navy, head of the chaplain service in the United States Navy, Dr. Barry Black.

I try to be here every day, as the majority leader, to listen to the prayers Dr. Black has prepared for the Senate and the country. They are always very good. I am grateful to him for what he pronounces through his prayers for us. Again I appreciate the statement of the majority leader today.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, growing up in the little town of Searchlight, there are a number of things that stand out in my mind. One is I remember so vividly a man by the name of Elwin Kent. Elwin was a friend of my father's. They grew up together. But Elwin as a little boy was stricken with polio. Elwin was very deformed. He walked with a very significant limp, and he had on his back a huge hump. I don't know, but it was at least a foot. It stuck out his back about a foot. He was a very handsome man, but he was terribly handicapped.

I came as a boy to realize how he got sick because when I was growing up, the scourge was Elwin's disease, polio. Infantile paralysis we called it. I worried about that as most young people of my age did. In Searchlight, as I was growing up we had no cases, but that didn't prevent my worrying about the disease.

My wife and I a short time ago—a matter of a month or so ago—were surprised when we got in the mail a letter sent to me in Searchlight, NV. I opened the letter, and it was from a girl I had heard about from my wife, in our conversations, with whom she had spent her early days. That was maybe in the second grade. Two little girls. My wife used to tell me about her red-haired friend Gail and how much she cared about her.

Gail found out where Landra, my wife, had gone. She learned that I was serving in the Senate, and she heard that I was from Searchlight and took a chance and wrote that letter.

The reason I mention that letter, which was such a surprise and made my wife feel so good, is that one of the things Landra remembers about Gail, in addition to her bright red hair, is the fact that as a little girl she had polio and was taken out of school and placed in a hospital, as my wife remembers, in an iron lung. So, of

course, my wife growing up worried about that. But Gail was gone, and she didn't really know how her life turned out.

Without belaboring the point, these two women who had known each other 50 years ago were able to spend time on the telephone. It was as if they had never been separated.

So Elwin Kent and Gail Randolph growing up contracted infantile paralysis. It was there. It was something we worried about, as did all people of our vintage.

Today is different. We have been able, through science, to eradicate polio in most every place in the world, but I still receive letters in my Senate offices from people who are concerned about other issues. I will read three of these letters addressed to me:

... My son 22 years old was in a diving accident just two weeks after graduating from high school and is now a quadriplegic. So instead of heading off to college on a soccer scholarship that autumn, he found himself being fitted for a wheelchair and a life of total dependency on others. ... while they [stem cells] may not cure him to the point of walking again, they will certainly provide him with an opportunity to improve the quality of his life. He wants to be able to feed himself, brush his own teeth, wash his hands and face when he wants to. ... I know you support stem cell research, but I just wanted to give you my support and the support of our entire family as you fight the fight for those who can't fight for themselves. ...

Mr. President, I want the record to reflect that I will use leader time so I don't take time from Senators on this side of the aisle. So I am using leader time.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. It is so noted.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have another letter from Yerington, NV. Here is what it says:

I am asking you again to do your best for my son and the millions of others who need a cure for diabetes. ... My son was in the hospital yesterday. ... I can't tell you how hard and painful it is to see your son like that. ... my wife and I would give our lives to ensure that our son can beat diabetes. ... The Senate will soon vote on the stem cell bill that you still support. Please try to change the minds of those that are not for it.

Then one final letter from a man in Las Vegas:

I have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). ... my family doesn't want me to leave them. At the least, my family wants some hope that science will be allowed to use all means available to them, to try to find some treatment that will extend life until a cure is found. I would like to have those people who are opposed to federal assistance for embryonic stem cell research for therapeutic purposes, explain to my family why they are being denied hope that might be available if the federal government funds all reasonable medical research for my illness and those other illnesses that today provide no hope for the future.

Mr. President, these families are not asking for anything except hope—hope—for a better future for them and their loved ones.

Stem cell research holds a promise for medical breakthroughs. As former

First Lady Nancy Reagan said so clearly, vividly, and who watched with great courage as her husband's Alzheimer's overtook this good man, she said:

I just don't see how we can turn our backs on this ... We have lost so much time already. She gave this statement in 2004:

I just really can't bear to lose any more time.

Unfortunately, more than 2 years have passed since Nancy Reagan said this, and this Republican-controlled Congress has been unable and unwilling to reach agreement on how to expand the President's restrictive stem cell policy that is hindering scientific progress toward possible cures and treatments for a wide variety of diseases and conditions.

We are rapidly approaching the 1-year anniversary of the date of the House of Representatives passing H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. This act would expand President Bush's 2001 policy for Federal funding for stem cell research and permit Federal researchers at NIH, the National Institutes of Health, which has the capability of the strongest oversight in the world, to finally explore the many possibilities stem cell research holds for America.

Over the past year, I have repeatedly asked the majority leader to find time to consider this bill which has a bipartisan majority of the Senate supporting it. My request for action has been met by delay and inaction. One year may not seem like a lot to people, especially in the Senate—we seem to have our days, weeks, months, and years run together—but 1 year is an eternity if someone you love is suffering from a condition where stem cell research, according to the experts, can offer help.

There are a number of very important issues this body ought to consider this session. I say, Mr. President, none—none—even though we have deficit problems, problems with our environment, education, health care, the war in Iraq—I say nothing is more important to the American people than legislation that could provide medical breakthroughs that would benefit millions—millions—of Americans. We can certainly do better than what we have done. We can do better for the Nevadans whose letters I have read.

I can see in my mind a man who was the chief executive officer of Nevada Power, the largest power company in Nevada, who contracted Lou Gehrig's disease. This young man lived 18 months—very difficult months. People are counting on the promise of this groundbreaking research. The passage of the House stem cell bill on May 24 of last year was a rare victory for bipartisanship here. It is my hope that we will embrace the same spirit of bipartisanship in the Senate and pass this legislation.

Immediately after the House passed its stem cell bill, I spoke with the majority leader about the need to take up

this crucial legislation as soon as possible. At that time, Dr. FRIST assured me that we would consider the stem cell bill in the Senate by July of last year. By the end of July of last year, the majority leader still hadn't scheduled debate on the stem cell bill. So I moved to take up and pass the House bill by unanimous consent. Dr. FRIST objected to this request but delivered a courageous speech the next day in which he expressed support for Federal funding for expanded embryonic stem cell research.

In that statement, the majority leader said, "The potential of stem cell research to save lives and human suffering deserves our increased energy and focus." Yet when we returned after the August recess of last year, the majority leader still could not find time to debate this important legislation. He found time for the Republicans, as the leaders of American churches have said, for a moral budget, he found time for drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge and more deficit spending, but still no time for keeping hope alive with the promise of stem cell research.

In December, just 5 months ago, the majority leader asked consent to take up and pass the House cord blood bill. Well, these were supposed to be joined together. We reluctantly said OK. We said we will do this and then we will move to the bill that we want, the one that passed the House. Well, at that time he expressed—he meaning Senator FRIST—again his commitment to the stem cell bill. Once again, we were not allowed to move to that bill. Instead, we passed the cord blood bill in exchange for a commitment to consider the stem cell bill early in this session.

Three months after he made that commitment, I raised the issue again, and I asked that he schedule time for the Senate to consider this issue prior to the 1-year anniversary passage of the House bill. Unfortunately, this request met the same fate as my previous requests.

Two months have passed since my last exchange with Senator FRIST, and he has yet to provide the Senate with an opportunity to pass this important legislation. Even as he announced his plans for a Health Week in the Senate sometime this month, he made it clear that stem cell research would not be part of his plan. Today is May 4, and we are fast approaching the 1-year anniversary of the House passing H.R. 810 and the start of Health Week. Still, no stem cell legislation.

For all of these reasons and many more, I am sending the majority leader a letter signed by 40 Democrats asking the majority leader to make H.R. 810 a priority during this Health Week. I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, May 2, 2006.

Hon. WILLIAM FRIST, M.D.,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR DR. FRIST: Nearly a year ago, the House of Representatives approved important legislation to end the restrictions that have kept stem cell research from fulfilling its potential to save lives and alleviate suffering. We understand that you are planning a week of Senate debate on legislation related to health. We urge you to bring the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005 (H.R. 810) to the Senate floor for consideration during this "Health Week".

Stem cell research has vast potential for curing diseases and saving lives. We know you recognize the enormous potential of this research for discovering new cures and therapies for diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease and spinal cord injuries, and commend the strong support you have expressed for approval of the House-passed bill. By allowing H.R. 810 to be brought to a vote, you can bring hope and help to millions of American patients and families suffering from these and other serious illnesses.

The House passed H.R. 810 in May 2005—yet the Senate has failed to take action for nearly a year. Further delay will mean more lost opportunities for new cures and new treatments. The Senate should mark the anniversary of the House vote with action, not more inaction. We therefore urge you to bring H.R. 810 to the Senate floor for debate and a vote during "Health Week". Millions of patients and their families across the nation cannot afford to wait any longer for enactment of this urgently needed legislation.

Sincerely,

Harry Reid, Dianne Feinstein, Tom Harkin, Ted Kennedy, Joe Lieberman, Barack Obama, Daniel Inouye, Jack Reed, Tom Carper, Russ Feingold, Herb Kohl, Paul Sarbanes, Frank R. Lautenberg, Debbie Stabenow, Bill Nelson, Maria Cantwell, Mary L. Landrieu, Jeff Bingaman, Max Baucus, Robert Menendez, Chuck Schumer, Byron L. Dorgan, Tim Johnson, Barbara Boxer, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Chris Dodd, John F. Kerry, Patty Murray, Jim Jeffords, Ken Salazar, Barbara A. Mikulski, Joe Biden, Evan Bayh, Patrick Leahy, Carl Levin, Mark Dayton, Dick Durbin, Blanche L. Lincoln, Daniel K. Akaka, Ron Wyden.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if we are truly committed to lowering the cost of health care in our country, we need to invest in medical research that has the potential to combat life-threatening and chronic diseases. Stem cell research shows tremendous promise. Federal funding of embryonic stem cell research will allow our Nation to lead the world in this research and ensure that stem cell research is conducted with the strongest oversight in the world. When it comes to the possibility of finding cures, we cannot leave our best and brightest researchers with their hands tied, and we cannot deny Americans the hope of eventually finding a cure for a wide range of illnesses.

The House dealt with this issue, and we should do the same. I hope the majority leader will find this legislation important enough to consider as part of Health Week, and I will work with him in any way possible to schedule this to move forward before May 24, the 1-year anniversary of the passage by

the House of this most important bill, a bill which gives hope to millions of Americans who, as indicated in these letters, are losing hope.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 30 minutes under the control of the minority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Democratic leader, Senator REID, for bringing this issue to the floor. This is something we have talked about a lot in our private meetings: stem cell research. It is a matter of great frustration, frustration because we understand there are literally millions of Americans who are counting on us, the Senate, to assume our responsibility and take up a bill that was passed by the House of Representatives almost 1 year ago.

Senator REID came to the Senate floor and for the last few moments told us of his own personal commitment to this issue, and I share it. He read letters from his constituents and talked about his life experience. He then presented a letter that we have sent to Senator FRIST asking him to use his power to bring this issue to the floor.

This morning across America, people got up, started their day, many of them as healthy as can be but some suffering from illness and others with members of their families suffering from serious illness. Many of the people keep going because there is the hope, just the hope, that something might come along—a treatment, a medicine—something that might give them a chance to have a full life. That is what stem cell research is all about.

When President Bush decided to announce that it would be the policy of the United States of America to restrict scientific research involving stem cells, he ended up closing off opportunities for people to live without fear, without disease, without the shortcomings of the illnesses from which they suffer. It was a Government-mandated decision which would stop that medical research here in the United States. Across the country, some States have said: We are going to lead if the Government won't. The State of California, my State of Illinois, and others have stepped up and said: We will fund stem cell research because we believe it is so critically important. Sadly, this administration refuses. Now it will take congressional action. The House has done its job. It has passed this bill and sent it to the Senate. We have waited.

It has been 346 days since the House of Representatives passed this important stem cell legislation. In just short of 2 weeks, it will be 1 year—1 year—since they sent us this bill. Sadly, in that period of time, despite his promises, as Senator REID has told us, Senator FRIST will not call up the stem cell research bill.

I was so encouraged—and many others were as well—when Senator FRIST came to the Chamber and said publicly

that he was going to support this bill. It gave hope to people, that finally we would have a bipartisan effort that would grow here in the Senate to the point where a majority would pass this legislation. But for reasons I can't explain, so many other things are of greater importance when it comes to the Senate agenda.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield for a question.

Mr. REID. The Senator from Illinois and I are about the same age. Do you remember as a boy being worried about polio?

Mr. DURBIN. Absolutely.

Mr. REID. And do you remember the relief that was given to us as boys, young boys, when a cure was found? They could give us a shot. We knew we wouldn't go into an iron lung or have a hump on our back like my friend Elwin, whom I love almost like an uncle—not almost, like an uncle.

Does the Senator acknowledge that all these people who suffer from Lou Gehrig's disease and Parkinson's and diabetes and all of these other diseases, that they have been told by the foremost scientists around the world that there is hope for them, that they would have the same relief we had when we learned there was a cure for polio?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would say in response to the Senator from Nevada the name Jonas Salk, a name no one ever heard of until this great researcher came up with a vaccine for polio. When we were in grade school as children and saw our fellow students crippled by polio, in fear that it could strike us, Jonas Salk, this researcher, came forward with that vaccine and he changed our lives. He took a burden off of our lives and the lives of our parents who worried about whether their kids would contract polio.

Why can't we give the same hope and same promise to a new generation of Americans with stem cell research? Why is our Government, why is this administration, why is the President blocking this research, and why won't the Senate Republican leadership bring this bill to the floor?

If this is about National Health Care Week, shouldn't we be talking about medical research? Shouldn't we be talking about new cures and new opportunities so people can have a better life? Unfortunately, we are not.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. REID. Does the Senator acknowledge that Jonas Salk and others doing this research had the full support of the Federal Government every step of the way on this very delicate, deliberate, tough path they followed to find a cure?

Mr. DURBIN. That is exactly the point we should remember when it comes to stem cell research. How much better would our research be if this Government stood behind efforts to

find cures instead of creating these obstacles?

When President Bush made his announcement—and I believe it was in August of 2001—about stem cell research, he did not take an absolute position saying he was opposed to stem cell research because it was immoral or for some other reason; he said he would allow stem cell research to continue along certain stem cell lines that currently exist. But in making that announcement, he restricted the opportunity to expand that research in our country. It was a Government decision to restrict the research into stem cells that could save lives and change lives dramatically. So I would say that what we face in the Senate is a moral imperative. Will we step forward now, 1 year after the House has passed this legislation? Will we put the bill on the floor and vote it up or down?

I can tell you, in the city of Chicago and in the State of Illinois, I have traveled around and met with many people who are counting on us.

I had a little gathering in Chicago at the Chicago Rehab Institute, one of the best in America, and we had people come in who were interested in this issue. We had folks from the American Diabetes Association who believe stem cell research may offer the opportunity for a cure for some forms of diabetes. As more and more people are stricken with this disease, as their lives are compromised and changed, can we deny them this opportunity?

Others came in suffering from Parkinson's. Parkinson's is a disease which I know a little bit about personally because of one of my closest friends in Congress, Lane Evans, the Congressman from Rock Island, IL. He and I came to the Congress in the same year of 1982. In 1996, I was out campaigning with Lane in a parade in Galesburg, IL. I didn't realize it at the time, but Lane felt that day that something was wrong with him. He wasn't sure what it was. He said he had lost the feeling in his hand. He didn't say anything that day, and it wasn't until several years later that the diagnosis was made that he suffers from Parkinson's. He has been a real profile in courage. He has stood up and represented the people of his district, and he has been very honest about his disease and how it has limited his life.

We were all saddened just a few weeks ago when Lane made the public announcement that he couldn't continue, that he would have to withdraw his name from the ballot this year. This young man—this young man—is going to have his life changed dramatically because of Parkinson's. Can we do anything less than push for medical research for those who may be suffering from Parkinson's or threatened by it? Does it make us a better or more moral people to withhold this research that can hold such promise for these people?

The same thing is true with Alzheimer's. As more and more Americans advance in age, Alzheimer's is more

prevalent. We find more instances of people in nursing homes who need special care. There is a chance, there is a good chance, that stem cell research may open some doors and some avenues to at least ameliorating the negative aspects of this Alzheimer's disease and maybe someday find a cure. How long can we wait? How long can we wait for the political leaders in the Senate to wake up to reality? The American people are counting on us.

If we wonder why the American voters are cynical, whether they question if this Congress has any value in their lives, take a look at this issue. For a year we have been sitting on a bill the majority leader in the Senate says he supports. He won't call up the stem cell research bill. I could go through a long list of other bills he has called, some that I consider just plain wrong, and others insignificant. They have taken the place of stem cell research. Why? Next week we are going to deal with Health Care Week. I salute Senator ENZI, the Senator from Wyoming. He wants to talk about health insurance. I don't agree with his approach. I have an alternative. I salute him for coming to the Senate floor and pushing this forward. Why can't we get the same leadership from the Republican leader of the Senate when it comes to stem cell research? How can we have a National Health Care Week and not deal with medical research after we promised over a year to do so?

I take a look at the people who came to that meeting in Chicago and remember so well a young man, a very young man in a wheelchair suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease, a handsome fellow with a beautiful young wife. He broke down in tears because he could barely speak. He was losing control of his body even as he sat there, telling me how critically important medical research was. Anyone who has seen a victim of Lou Gehrig's disease, whether it was the late Senator Jacob Javits of New York or, of course, the late Lou Gehrig himself, as we saw his baseball career come to an end, understands how devastating this can be. The only thing that keeps many going is the hope, the chance that a cure will be found. Where is that hope? Where is that cure? It is buried in the calendar of the Senate. It is buried in the calendar of the Senate because the leadership will not call up stem cell research for a vote.

Instead, Senator FRIST is going to bring the issue of medical malpractice to the floor again next week. It has been brought over and over again. After days have been devoted to debate, it has been stopped because many believe this is an issue of State responsibility and not an issue for the Federal Government. Yet he wants to take up several days on the Senate calendar, several days which may ultimately lead to no conclusion on the issue of medical malpractice. Wouldn't it be better to devote those days, 3 of those days, to stem cell research?

Think about it. As we avoid our responsibility in stem cell research, the medical challenges are still there. All across the United States, loving couples who were unable to conceive a child have turned to in vitro fertilization. Beautiful young babies have resulted, children who are loved and cherished because of the advances of science.

But during the course of this in vitro fertilization, spare fertilized eggs are produced. What will happen to those eggs? In many instances they will be thrown away, destroyed on the spot. Instead of destroying them, wouldn't it be better to take the embryonic stem cells from those same eggs and use them to find a cure for Alzheimer's, for Parkinson's, for diabetes, for Lou Gehrig's disease, to see if we can regenerate spinal cord injuries and give people who are crippled and paralyzed a chance?

Let me tell you the story of one of those people right now. He is from Germantown, IL, which I know pretty well, down around my home area of East St. Louis. His name is Matt Langenhorst. Matt was 31 years old. He was a picture of health, a 6-foot-4-inch police officer. In the year 2001, he and his wife were hit by a car. Matt is now paralyzed from the neck down. His wife is his full-time caregiver.

Today, Matt moves his wheelchair by blowing into a tube. Simple things that we take for granted take Matt minutes and hours to accomplish. Almost everything in his life requires assistance.

When he was injured, Matt and his family were certain that research was promising that he would walk again. They were counting on medical research. That was 5 years ago—5 years paralyzed.

His family was in my office this week asking why we have not done more. They wanted to know what we were doing about stem cell research. This bill passed the House of Representatives with Democrats and Republicans. What are we waiting for?

I can't answer that question. I don't know what could be more important from the Republican majority point of view than to move forward with this critical stem cell research. I think the Senate should pass H.R. 810 as quickly as possible. Perhaps we should set aside some of the other pets and favorites for a few moments and address this issue of medical research. So many people are counting on us.

When we look at the budget that the President has just sent us, sadly I am afraid medical research is not the priority it once was. I was here when, on a bipartisan basis, Congressman John Porter, Republican from Illinois; Senator ARLEN SPECTER, Republican from Pennsylvania; Senator TOM HARKIN, Democrat from Iowa, all agreed we would double the budget for the National Institutes of Health so that they could find more cures, there would be more money to be invested in research.

What happened last year? We froze the budget. We decided not to increase

it. In this year's budget, sadly, the President did the same thing. This year's budget from President Bush to Capitol Hill cuts funding for 18 of the 19 institutes at the National Institutes of Health.

What does that mean? It means 642 fewer research projects will be undertaken, 642 projects trying to find cures for cancer, heart disease, stroke, muscular dystrophy, and so many other terrible disorders. What greater priority is there for this country than medical research? What can we possibly think is more important than advancing research?

I met recently with some scientific investigators who said: You know, I am worried, worried if we don't invest in research the young people who should be developing the expertise will not have the incentive to do it. They will be afraid the NIH won't be able to fund the important projects they can devote their lives to.

The President has decided first to stop stem cell research, to limit it to a very small number of stem cell lines that are inadequate to the task of developing cures for disease, and then to cut the budget for medical research at the National Institutes of Health. The President does this at the same time that he is calling for tax cuts for the most wealthy people in America, people who have not even asked for a tax cut. Why in the world would we build up the debt of America and cut back on essentials such as medical research and education and health care to provide a tax cut for the wealthiest people in America? The priorities are just wrong. The Bush policies, when it comes to medical research, are wrong. They are moving America in a wrong direction. They are moving us away from finding cures and bringing hope to those who are afflicted with disease.

Sadly, we have to change that direction. We have to say to the President we don't accept this Bush policy. It is wrong when it comes to medical research, and that decision and that statement has to be made right here on the Senate floor with 100 men and women elected from across the United States to speak for the people who are waiting in hope, people like those I have described—people like that couple in Germantown, IL, the Langenhorsts, Matt and Erika. I don't know if they are following this debate. I hope they are. More important, I hope this debate leads to something positive.

Next week, when Senator FRIST wants to bring up national health care, we are going to make an effort on the floor of the Senate to bring up stem cell research. It is about time he faces the reality. We can't put this off any longer. He has promised time to deal with so many issues—immigration and so many other things. He said he wants to set aside a certain piece of our schedule and devote it to a debate on gay marriage, a constitutional amendment on gay marriage. We want to spend a week or so talking about gay marriage.

What is more important? Stem cell research and medical research to find cures, that we spend the time to get that done, or 4 or 5 days on gay marriage? Honest to goodness, when it comes down to the priorities and values of the Republican leadership, I don't understand it.

They also want to consider a constitutional amendment on flag burning. You know, I have not noticed an epidemic of flag burning across America. I love our flag like every other American, but we are going to devote 3 or 4 or 5 days to talk about another constitutional amendment to ban flag burning? I would much rather see us put as a first priority medical research and stem cell research.

We are prepared to challenge Senator FRIST. Every time he comes up with a clearly political issue designed strictly for votes in November rather than for the needs of this Nation, we are going to challenge him. We are going to challenge him to bring up the issues that count, issues like stem cell research, issues like the energy costs across America that have to be addressed here and now, issues like the cost of health insurance, which not only threatens families but threatens the future of many businesses, particularly small businesses. Those are the real issues. Those are the things that people care about.

Instead, we fritter away our time, we waste our time on virtually insignificant issues such as this political posturing for the next election. This stem cell research issue is a bipartisan issue. There are Republican and Democratic Senators who support it. It is a chance for us to stand up once as an institution and be proud that we have a bipartisan solution to advance medical research in America. But, unfortunately, we have not been able to prevail. Unfortunately, for 346 days now we have waited for Senator FRIST to call the bill on stem cell research.

That is his responsibility. That is the responsibility of the Republican majority. I hope they accept that responsibility. Senator FRIST, more than any other Member of the Senate, understands the importance of medical research. He is an honored cardio surgeon, a transplant surgeon who brings his special expertise to the floor of the Senate. When he announced he was for stem cell research, it was a breakthrough. It was a breakthrough that on the Republican side, a man of his stature would say that he supports it. Now that he has made that commitment almost a year ago, it is time for us to act, and act now. We need to make sure we restore the budget for the National Institutes of Health. We need to move this bill forward.

If we start cutting the NIH budget, advances that have saved lives in heart disease and Leukemia, cystic fibrosis, and so many other areas, those advances will slow down. It is just that simple. Medical research is slow. It takes time, and it costs money. But it

saves lives. It means a mom or dad with an incurable disease can live long enough so their kids will remember them.

Between the prohibition on stem cell research and the cuts to NIH funding, lifesaving medical research under the Bush administration in this country is sadly on the ropes. We can do something about it. We can pass H.R. 810. We can tell President Bush that his budget priorities are wrong, that we are going to put the money into stem cell research.

There are unused embryonic stem cells in eggs donated voluntarily by couples who no longer need them, which can be used for this valuable research. Otherwise they will be discarded, thrown away. Estimates suggest there are 400,000 of these unused embryonic stem cells currently available for research. What is stopping those cells from moving from storage in these frozen environments to laboratories where they may find cures? The decision of the President of the United States to stop the research. When we lift this restriction on Federal research dollars, it will provide stem cells that medical science tells us have the ability to change lives and save lives and to transform into almost every type of cell and tissue. Research will show us how to harness that ability to heal and repair damage done by disease.

We owe it to the families of those who are affected by disease and disability. The stem cell issue will not go away. I urge Senator FRIST to show the same leadership today that he showed last year when he announced his support for stem cell research by announcing when he will schedule this for a vote, give us a time certain, do not leave the floor of the Senate today without a time certain on a vote on stem cell research. We owe it to the millions of families across America who are counting on us.

Mr. President, I reserve the remainder of my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ISAKSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today I come to the Senate floor to speak briefly about stem cell research and the hope it holds for millions of Americans in the years ahead.

Hope is one of the qualities of spirit that make us human. Hope allows us to dream of a better life for our children, our community, and our world, especially for loved ones now suffering or in pain.

Hope is what stem cell research holds for the parents of children with diabetes, who dream of a day when their constant fears for their children's well-being are things of the past.

Hope is what stem cell research brings to those with Parkinson's disease, who think of the time when the tremors of that disease are banished forever.

Hope is what stem cell research brings to millions of Americans who seek better treatments and better drugs for cancer, diabetes, spinal injury, and many other serious conditions.

Hope cannot be extinguished or destroyed but it can be frozen. And it has now been frozen for 5 long years, ever since President Bush shut down the stem cell research program begun in the Clinton administration, and imposed arbitrary and unwarranted restrictions on this lifesaving research, based on ideology, instead of science.

For 5 years, we have watched as America has abdicated its global leadership in this important new field, by keeping our best scientists on the sidelines.

In those 5 years, we have squandered the opportunity to set strong ethical guidelines for this research through the oversight that NIH funding can bring. Through NIH, we have made progress consistent with our values in new fields of in as recombinant DNA research, which once also seemed strange and controversial. We can do the same for stem cell research but only if NIH is allowed to become a leader in this new field.

Hope soared anew a year ago, when the House of Representatives set aside partisan differences and courageously approved legislation to end those restrictions, and give our scientists the tools they need to make progress in the fight against disease.

The same strong bipartisan support exists in the Senate for ending the unwarranted restrictions on stem cell research.

There is no one in the Senate with stronger pro-life credentials than Senator HATCH, but he knows that supporting stem cell research is the pro-life position to take.

There is no greater supporter of medical research in the Senate than Senator SPECTER, and he feels strongly that stem cell research is one of the great breakthroughs of modern medicine.

There is no one with a greater depth of conscience than Senator SMITH, and he has searched his heart and prayerfully decided that support for stem cell research is the moral choice.

Bipartisan legislation was passed by a vote of 238 to 194 in the House of Representatives on May 24, 2005, a year ago this month. It was ordered placed on the Senate Calendar on June 6, where it has remained stalled ever since. If the House bill was put to a Senate vote today or tomorrow or next week, it would pass by a solid bipartisan majority in the Senate too.

Why? Because the Republican Senate leadership stands in the way. Summer came and went with no action in the Senate, then the winter, then the

spring, and now we are about to reach an anniversary none of us ever wanted to see. On May 24, it will be 1 year since the House acted, and the Senate still refuses to act.

Let us vow that we will not mark this anniversary with yet more inaction and indifference.

The Senate has had a busy schedule, but in that schedule we have found time for all manner of giveaways to those who already have much in the way of wealth and power.

Now, it is time to turn our attention to those who need our help the most. And that includes the millions of Americans who have seen their hopes blocked by the administration's cruel policies and the Senate's shameful inaction.

The Senate leadership has scheduled a Health Week for later this month. Will we use this opportunity to debate the flawed Medicare drug program? Or the soaring number of the uninsured? Will we do what we need to do to unlock the vast potential of stem cell research? Sadly, the answer to each of these questions is probably no. These and many other major priorities for the Nation will remain unaddressed.

I urge my colleagues to join me in asking the Senate leadership to schedule a vote on House Resolution 810, the House-passed stem cell research bill, during the coming Health Week and to do so before May 24, the first year anniversary of its approval by the House of Representatives.

Millions of patients and their families look with hope to stem cell research, and they should not have to tolerate any greater delay or any further failures.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority time is 19 minutes 10 seconds.

NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I will draw attention to two topics today. I will address the comments made about stem cell research because we have exciting things happening in that field that I will report to my colleagues.

First though, there is breaking news, with Reuters, the Associated Press, and several other outlets reporting that shortly we may have a group of North Korean refugees formally accepted by the United States for the first time since the Korean peninsula was divided by war over half a century ago. This is being reported by a couple of news outlets. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the news report and a related article.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Associated Press, May 3, 2006]

OFFICIALS: U.S. ASSISTS N. KOREAN REFUGEES

(By Foster Klug)

WASHINGTON.—The Bush administration is working to bring a group of North Korean